



Appendix

Uttara-kāṇḍa, the pretender kāṇḍa

1. Introduction

§1 The *Uttara-kāṇḍa* (abbr.: U-K), which claims to be Vālmikī's narration of the story of Rāma after his consecration as King of Ayodhyā, is generally presented in complete editions of the Rāmāyaṇa as though it is the seventh *kāṇḍa* of the Rāmāyaṇa. However, for over a century scholars are generally agreed that most if not all of the U-K is a later addition tacked on to Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa (Vālmikī-rāmāyaṇa).²⁶¹ This essay takes a fresh look at the U-K and its status.

2. Some preliminary remarks

§2.1 *Sarga* 1 of the *Bālakāṇḍa* of the Rāmāyaṇa gives a very rough outline of the story to be developed later. It makes no reference to the U-K or to anything in it. *Sarga* 3 gives an outline of the story of Rāma as visualized by Vālmikī. The U-K, or a part of it, is referred to in verses 1.3.28 and 1.4.2; the phrase *uttare kāvyē* in 1.3.29 seems to refer to a distinct *kāvya* or perhaps merely means "in the excellent poem"; but these verses are probably much later additions.

There are *phalaśruti* ślokas at the end of the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa* of the Rāmāyaṇa itself. Since *phalaśruti* ślokas will occur only at the end of a work, this means that the Rāmāyaṇa ended with the *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*. People who want to consider the U-K as a part of the Rāmāyaṇa claim, without real evidence to support such claim, that the above *phalaśruti*

261 See for instance R P Goldman: 1984, *RV* 1, p.15.

śloka of the Rāmāyaṇa are interpolations. The Critical Edition relegates the *phalaśruti* verses of both the Rāmāyaṇa and the *U-K* to the appendix. But it will be shown further below that even in ancient days many felt that the *U-K* was not really a part of Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa.

§2.3 The author of the *U-K* repeatedly refers to Vālmīki as a great and eminent sage. Since it is most unlikely that Vālmīki would have praised himself in these terms, this also suggests that he was not the author of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. The *U-K* further refers to the ‘*rāmāyaṇa kāvya*’ as an already completed work; this too suggests that the *U-K* itself did not consider itself to be part of the Rāmāyaṇa.²⁶²

3. A preliminary comparison of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Uttarakāṇḍa

§3.1 Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa is superbly planned and is executed with great poetic skill. The *U-K* lacks the poetic quality, dignity, unity and high moral standpoint that one finds in the Rāmāyaṇa proper. The concepts, plan and execution of the *U-K* are all poor, and the text is a hodge-podge of purāṇa-like stories.

§3.2 Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa says that Brahmā asked Vālmīki to compose “the story of Rāma” (Rāma-kathā) as a poem;²⁶³ it also describes itself as “the great story of Sītā, and of the killing of Rāvaṇa”.²⁶⁴ Indeed the Rāmāyaṇa is really the story of Rāma and Sītā and there is practically nothing in it that does not contribute to their story. On the other hand, sixty-nine out of the hundred Sargas of the *U-K* have nothing to do with Rāma or Sītā.

§3.3 It seems to be that today only a few scholars — and some politicians, feminists, social reformers and people who wish to indulge in Rāma-bashing — that seem to consider the *U-K* to be a part of Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa. Scholarly opinion holds that not only is the *U-K* a

262 (i) The *U-K* describes Vālmīki as *mahāmuni* and *muniṣṭhava* several times; see e.g. *U-K* 48.7, 84.1, 86.4, 7 and elsewhere too. (ii) See *U-K* 84.3: *kṛtsnaṃ rāmāyaṇaṃ kāvyaṃ gāyatām parayā mudā*.

263 1.2.34–36 uses the terms “*rāmakathā*”, “*rāmāyaṇakathā*” and “*rāmaśya kathā*”.

264 1.4.6: *kāvyam rāmāyaṇam kṛtsnam sītāyāś caritam mahat | paulastyavadham ity eva cakāra caritavrataḥ ||*.

later addition to the Rāmāyaṇa, but also that by the time it was added, the Rāmāyaṇa was already recognized as an exemplary work, and Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā as ideal models for human behaviour.

§3.4 However, although right from the beginning the *U-K* seems to have been considered to be *distinct* from Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa, it got to be viewed by many that the two texts are inseparable, and the *U-K* is included in many of the printed texts of the Rāmāyaṇa. But, traditionally, the *U-K* has generally been ignored. (See §§18–20 below.)

4. *The societal values of the Uttarakāṇḍa*

§4.1 The *U-K* adopts (and indirectly advocates) certain societal values in regard to the position of women and Śūdras in society. But its stance is in direct opposition to that of Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa and is further evidence that the *U-K* is not a part of the genuine Rāmāyaṇa; indeed, it shows that the *U-K* is not by Vālmiki, the author of the Rāmāyaṇa. Since Rāma was revered as a *dharmātmā*, his ideas seen in the Rāmāyaṇa proper cannot be replaced by new ideas as to what *dharma* is, except by claiming that he himself adopted those new ideas.²⁶⁵ That is what the *U-K* does. It embodies the new ideas in two stories that are usually referred to as *Sītā-parityāga*, the abandonment of Sītā (after Rāma and Sītā return to Ayodhyā and Rāma was consecrated as king) and *Śambūka-vadha*, the killing of the ascetic Śambūka. The *U-K* attributes both actions to Rāma, whom people acknowledged to be righteous and as a model to follow. By masquerading as an *additional kāṇḍa* of the Rāmāyaṇa composed by Vālmiki himself, the *U-K* succeeded, to a considerable extent, in sabotaging the values presented in Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa. This will be discussed in detail further below.

§4.2 The heart of the *U-K* consists of the two episodes mentioned above, and it is these episodes that have captured the interest of various poets, playwrights, scholars, politicians, feminists and social reformers alike. We shall first give the two episodes in brief.

265 For as R P Goldman (1984: *RV*, vol. 1, p.42.) says, by the time of the addition of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, the text of Rāma's story had taken on "a fully defined function as an exemplary tale" with Rāma as "a model for human behaviour."

1. The U-K story of Sītā's exile

§5.1 The U-K says that soon after Rāma's return from Lankā and his coronation, he heard that there was widespread dissatisfaction among the people of Ayodhyā that he had taken back Sītā who, according to the norms of the society, should be rejected since she had spent almost a year in Rāvaṇa's custody. Rāma was perturbed by the report and was plunged into sadness. *Afraid of earning a bad reputation among his people*, he decided that Sītā, who was pregnant (with twins) at that time should be exiled. *Warning his brothers against raising any protest*,²⁶⁶ he ordered Lakṣmaṇa to take Sītā across the Ganga and leave her there, beyond the borders of his kingdom, near Vālmīki's hermitage.²⁶⁷ Sītā was not aware of any of this till Lakṣmaṇa took her across the Ganga and told her of Rāma's decision. (A point that is missed by many is that Rāma ordered Lakṣmaṇa to leave Sītā near the hermitage of Vālmīki, where Sītā would certainly be spotted very soon by Vālmīki or by his disciples; and when Lakṣmaṇa left her there, he informed her that Vālmīki was a very dear friend of Daśaratha, and that she could live in comfort under his care.²⁶⁸ The U-K says that near Vālmīki's hermitage itself there were also several other hermitages, with Rishis, their wives, disciples and children;²⁶⁹ the area was not a forest with wild tigers or Rākṣasas.²⁷⁰ Vālmīki told Sītā to feel quite at home staying in the care of the ascetic women who lived close to his āśram and who will look after her as their own child.²⁷¹ The U-K says also that Lakṣmaṇa remained in his chariot, on the Ayodhyā-

266 U-K 44.18: *na cāsmi prativaktavyaḥ sītāṃ prati kathañcana |*

267 U-K 44.16–17: Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa: *gaṅgāyās tu pare pāre vālmīkeḥ sumahātmanaḥ | āśramo ... || tatraināṃ vijane kakṣe viśrjya raghunandana |*

268 U-K 46.16: *rājño daśarathasyaiṣa pitur me munipūṅgavaḥ | sakhā paramako vipro vālmīkiḥ sumahāyāśāḥ ||*

269 U-K 46.15 refers to the area as *brahmaṛṣiṇām tapovanam*; U-K 48.1–2 speak of "sons of rishis: *munidārakāḥ* and *muniputrāḥ*. U-K 48.11 speaks of nearby āśrams.

270 Many mistakenly think that the hermitage was in a grim forest full of dangerous animals and perhaps even rākṣasas. As stated in the previous note, it is a *tapovana*, that is, a *meditation grove*, where ascetics practised austerities. (The word *vana* can mean a *garden*, or a *grove*, or a *forest*; however, the proper word for a dense forest is *araṇya*. Rāvaṇa kept Sītā imprisoned in his *Aśoka-vana* that he used also as his *pramadā-vana* (pleasure-garden) for dallying with his women.)

271 U-K.48.11–12: Vālmīki tells Sītā: *āśramasyavidūre me tāpasyas tapasi sthitāḥ | tās tvāṃ vatse yathā vatsaṃ pālayiṣyanti nityaśaḥ || ... | yathā svagrhaṃ abhyetya viśādaṃ caiva mā kṛthāḥ ||*

side of the river, and left for Ayodhyā only after he saw Vālmiki lead her into his hermitage.²⁷² This also shows that Vālmiki's āśram was not in a forest or heavily wooded area,²⁷³ and that the abandonment of Sītā, cruel as it was, was arranged with a lot of concern for her safety and physical comfort.)

II. The Śambūka story in the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*

§5.2 The major portion of the *U-K* has nothing to do with Rāma or Sītā. The only significant chapters of the *U-K* are devoted to the story of *Sītā-parityāga* (discussed above) and to the Śambūka story. The Śambūka story says that an aged Brahmin brought the dead body of his very young son to Rāma's presence and complained that the death of a young boy had happened in Rāma's kingdom only because of some grievous misconduct on Rāma's part (*U-K* 64.9: *rāmasya duṣkṛtaṃ kiṃcin mahad*

272 (i) *U-K* 49.1: *dṛṣṭvā tu maithilīm sītām āśramam saṃpraveśitām*. (ii) See *U-K* 46.16–17. (iii) The paragraph in the text shows that the *U-K* story has been greatly distorted in the Assamese *Uttara-kāṇḍa* generally attributed to Śaṅkaradeva; (however, it is doubtful whether it was really written by Śaṅkaradeva; see p.588 of Biswanarayan Shastri: *Rāmāyaṇa in Assamese literature* in V Raghavan (ed.): *The Rāmāyaṇa tradition in Asia* (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi 1981)). W L Smith assumes that Vālmiki is the author of the Sanskrit *U-K* and he is also emphatic that Śaṅkaradeva's *Uttara-kāṇḍa* is based on the Sanskrit *Uttara-Kāṇḍa* (W L Smith: *Wrath of Sītā, J Vaishnava Studies* 4 (1994), p.7). But Śaṅkaradeva's version is an *extreme* distortion of the Sanskrit *U-K* story, as can be seen from what is stated above in the text, contrasted with the following summary and comments by W L Smith on the Assamese version: "*Sītā is shocked to realize that her husband has commanded that she be left to die in the forest. This is a point that Śaṅkaradeva stresses. Sītā has not simply been exiled to the forest (banabāsa), but abandoned there to perish. Rāma has not simply repudiated her; he has tried to murder her.*" (W L Smith, *ibid.*, p. 8.) Smith goes on to say that, it is not an exaggeration to say that Rāma tried to murder Sītā, since he ordered Sītā to be abandoned in the "jungle", a dangerous wilderness filled with wild beasts and savages. But, in reality, the Sanskrit *U-K* shows that Sītā was not left in a jungle and there was no more danger to Sītā's life than if she had been sent to her father Janaka's house. Smith's comments that "in the Sanskrit [*Uttara-kāṇḍa*], Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa to leave Sītā near the āśram of Vālmiki. He remains however, unaware of her fate" is hardly tenable in view of *U-K* 49.1 cited in the text. Lakṣmaṇa saw Vālmiki take her to an āśram (*U-K* 49.1). (iv) Also, Smith seems to mistake Bhavabhūti for Vālmiki. The statements he ascribes, on pp. 5–6 of his article, to what he calls "Vālmiki's *Uttara-kāṇḍa*" are not found anywhere in the Sanskrit *Uttara-kāṇḍa*; they seem to be derived from verses 1.5–6 of Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita*. His statements on p.7 that Śaṅkaradeva "bases his *Uttara-kāṇḍa* on Vālmiki's original" and that "unlike his peers, [he] apparently depends on Vālmiki and Vālmiki alone" are also incorrect.

273 The decision to abandon Sītā was cruel, but it was carried out with compassion for her in that she was not simply "abandoned in the wilderness".

asti na saṃśayaḥ |). Rāma consulted his ministers Vasiṣṭa, Mārkaṇḍeya, Maudgalya, Vāmadeva, Kāśyapa, Kātyāyana, Jābāli, Gautama and Nārada who advised him that the Brahmin boy's death happened because some Śūdra was performing *tapas* somewhere,²⁷⁴ and that Rāma should take action against him. According to the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, Rāma went in his aerial car searching all over his kingdom for the Śūdra; in the course of his search he came upon a person performing *tapas*; Rāma asked him what his *varṇa* was, and he identified himself as born of a Śūdra mother and that his name was Śambūka.²⁷⁵ The *U-K* says that Rāma then cut off the Śūdra's head and that as already predicted by Rāma's advisors, the Brahmin boy in far-away Ayodhyā immediately came back to life!²⁷⁶

But Rāma's killing of Śambūka is inconsistent with the portrayal of Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. (See §9.1 below.)

§6.0 As we look more closely at the *U-K* episode of Sītā's exile, we shall see that there are a number of reasons for deciding that this *U-K* story is also not a creation of Vālmīki and that it is not a part of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

§6.1.1 The *U-K* story says that soon after Rāma's coronation there was *widespread* dissatisfaction in Ayodhyā that Rāma had accepted Sītā who had been in Rāvaṇa's custody for many months. But this contradicts what is said in the *Rāmāyaṇa* about how happy and contented the people were under Rāma's rule, with no famine or premature death, for thousands of years following his coronation.²⁷⁷ This strongly suggests that the story in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, and perhaps the *U-K* itself, is not by Vālmīki and is not really a part of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

274 *U-K* 65.23: śūdras tapyati durbuddhis tena bālavadho hy ayam ||

275 Paula Richman: "Why can't a Śūdra perform asceticism? Śambūka in three modern South Indian plays" (pp.125-148) in Mandakranta Bose (ed.): *The Rāmāyaṇa Revisited* (O.U.P. [Oxford] 2004), says, erroneously, that the "*U-K* attributed to Vālmīki" says that Rāma's ministers identified that "a Śūdra named Śambūka has been practicing *tapas*."

276 *U-K* 67.5: tasmin muhūrte bālo 'sau jīvena samayujyata ||

277 See 1.1.71-72: prahr̥ṣṭamudito lokas tuṣṭaḥ puṣṭaḥ sudhārmikāḥ | ... na putramaraṇam kecid drakṣyanti puruṣāḥ kvacit | 6.116.85: na ca sma vṛddhā bālānāṃ pretakāryāṇi kurvate |

§6.1.2 Consider the *agni-praveśa* episode occurring in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*. If it was to prove to the Rākṣasas, the monkeys and the bears assembled in Laṅkā that Sītā was chaste, the *agni-praveśa* was totally unnecessary. Hanumān's testimony was already known to Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the monkeys and bears in Rāma's army. There were other witnesses too who could attest to her purity: Vibhīṣaṇa and his wife Saramā, their daughters Kalā and Analā, Rāvaṇa's own wife Maṇḍodarī, as well as Trijaṭā and any number of other rākṣasis who were guarding Sītā in the aśoka grove; even Sītā's appearance as she was — if she had been brought to Rāma's presence straight from the *Aśoka-vana* where she had been held captive — in her pitiable appearance, unbathed, unkempt, wearing a dusty soiled raiment and no ornaments,²⁷⁸ would have been evidence that she had not been living in luxury in Rāvaṇa's palace. Therefore, the question as to why Rāma spoke those harsh words that led to Sītā's *agni-praveśa* requires proper consideration.

One explanation for Rāma's words is that he must have wanted the "world at large", including the 'ordinary', uncultured men ("*prākṛtāḥ*") also to be convinced of Sītā's purity. A second explanation is that Rāma's harsh words form the *pūrva-pakṣa* and Sītā's reply the *siddhānta* of the debate on whether a woman who had, due to whatever circumstances, spent a period in another man's house should be taken back or not. These matters will be discussed elsewhere. But anyway, Sītā's *agni-praveśa*, witnessed by Lakṣmaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumān, Aṅgada, Jāmbavān and large numbers of monkeys and bears, as well as by the Devas, would certainly achieve the purpose of convincing the people of Ayodhyā of Sītā's purity when, as one may suppose, these witnesses tell the people of Ayodhyā and elsewhere of the happenings in Laṅkā. Rāma certainly had looked upon Sītā's *agni-praveśa* as squelching the possibility of *any doubt anybody anywhere* may have about Sītā's chastity.²⁷⁹ We may therefore expect that Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān and others, if not Rāma himself, would have made the *agni-praveśa* of Sītā public knowledge.

278 See Hanumān's description of Sītā in captivity in the Aśoka woods: e.g. U-K, ch.13.

279 See 6.106.13–14: Rāma says: *ananyahṛdayām bhaktām maccittaparirakṣiṇīm | aham apy avagacchāmi maithilīm janakātmajāṃ || pratyayārtham tu lokānām trayāṇām satyasamśrayaḥ | upekṣe cāpi vaidehīm praviśantīm hutāśanam ||*

Indeed, the *U-K* itself suggests that the people of Ayodhyā would have been told of what happened to Rāma and Sītā during their exile. For instance, the people knew that Sītā had been forcibly abducted by Rāvaṇa, and even the detail that she had been held in the Aśoka woods.²⁸⁰ It is beyond belief that they had been told that detail but not about the spectacular event of Sītā's *agni-praveśa* and how her purity had been attested to by the gods themselves. Note also that according to the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, Hanumān and others who had been with Rāma in Laṅkā stayed on in Ayodhyā for *more than two months* after Rāma's coronation.²⁸¹ It is unbelievable that they would not have told the people of Sītā's *agni-praveśa* – especially in view of Rāma's declaration that the *agni-praveśa* in Laṅkā shall be a means to convince the people of the world of Sītā's purity.²⁸² They would have also told the people of Ayodhyā that after her *agni-praveśa*, Sītā not only emerged unscathed by the fire, but was showered high praise by the Devas and that *the Devas told Rāma that Sītā was absolutely pure and blameless, and asked him to take her back*.²⁸³ It is therefore beyond belief that Vālmīki would say (as the *U-K* does) that there was *widespread* disapproval of Rāma's acceptance of Sītā. The *U-K* story is therefore highly suspect.

§6.1.3 We note that the *U-K* does not, in fact, speak about any suspicion about Sītā's chastity in the mind of any person in Ayodhyā. The *U-K* describes the people's feeling of dissatisfaction at Rāma's action as follows, "*Setting aside his anger, Rāma brought her back to his household. What kind of happiness does he feel by sexual union with her whom Rāvaṇa had forcibly carried her away, seating her in his lap? Why does he not reject her who was in the custody of the Rākṣasa? [Because of Rāma's behaviour] we will also have to be forgiving towards our wives [who stay in another man's house for some days], [for] people follow the king's*

280 *U-K*, 42.18: *laṅkāṃ api purnar nītām aśokavanikāṃ gatām | rakṣasāṃ vaśam āpannāṃ kathāṃ rāmo na kutsate ||*

281 See *U-K*, 38.17: *evam teṣāṃ yayau māso dvitīyaḥ śaiśirah sukham |*

282 See e.g. 6.106.14, quoted above.

283 6.106.9: Agni deva tells Rāma: *viśuddhabhāvāṃ niṣpāpāṃ pratigrhṇīṣva rāghava*

behaviour.”²⁸⁴ It is to be noted that the dissatisfaction expressed here is not in regard to *Sītā's character*, but in regard to *Rāma's action*.

The evidence contradicts the scholars who have said that according to the *U-K* there was widespread or “continuing” suspicion of *Sītā's* chastity; none of those scholars cite any evidence from the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*; some of them seem to have been confusing the later, fictional, play *Uttararāmacarita* of Bhavabhūti with the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*.²⁸⁵

§6.1.4 Sending *Sītā* into exile may have been perhaps justified by *Kṣatriyadharma*, but the *Rāma* of *Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa* had categorically renounced the *Kṣatriyadharma*; he had described it as great *adharma* (unrighteousness) tinged with a little *dharma* (the *Kṣatriyadharma* of obeying the people's wishes). So why did the author of the *U-K* include the *Sītā-parityāga* story (and the *Śambūka* story) in his narration?

§7.1 The *U-K* story of the exile of *Sītā* seems to have been motivated to promote the ideas (1) that a woman who had been abducted and then rescued should not be welcomed back into the family, (2) that a husband may treat his wife in any manner he likes and that she should accept it meekly and without protest, and be totally subservient to her husband whom she should worship as her deity even if he treats her badly, and (3) that nobody has the right to criticize such action by the husband. This stand of the *U-K* is unfortunately shared by many in India even today. The intent of the *Śambūka* story seems to have been to establish that *śūdras* are not eligible to practise *tapas* (or other activities associated

284 I have given in the text a translation of *U-K* 42.16–19 that read as follows: *amarṣaṃ prṣṭhataḥ kṛtvā svaveśma punar ānayat || kīdrśaṃ hrdaye tasya sītāsambhogajam sukham | aṅkam āropya hi purā rāvaṇena balāddhrtām || ... rakṣasāṃ vaśam āpannāṃ kathaṃ rāmo na kutsate | asmākam api dāreṣu sahanīyaṃ bhaviṣyati | yathā hi kurute rājā prajā tam anuvartate ||*

285 See e.g. R P Goldman: 1984, *RV* vol. 1, p.13; Paula Richman: *Introduction*, p.7 in Paula Richman: *Many Rāmāyaṇas* (O.U.P., Delhi 1992); David Schulman: *Fire and Flood*, in *Many Rāmāyaṇas* (1992), p.89; R. Lefebvre in “*The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki*”, vol.4 (Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), p.45 note 152; W L Smith: *The wrath of Sītā: Śāṅkaradeva's Uttarakāṇḍa*, pp. 5–6 in *J. Vaishnava Studies* vol. 12 no. 4, 1994; R P Goldman: *Resisting Rāma . . . in Rāmāyaṇa Revisited* (ed. M. Bose) (O.U.P. 2004), p. 39 for instance; also R P Goldman and S J Goldman in ‘*Rāmāyaṇa*’, p. 82 in Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (eds.) *Hindu World* (Rutledge, 2004). None of them has cited anything in the *U-K* to support their position. Smith mistakes Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita* for the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*.

with especially Brahmans). It was probably thought that the best way to present these right-wing reactionary ideas that are really contrary to the spirit of Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa, is to make them part of a text, name the text as a “later kāṇḍa” (of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa) composed by Vālmiki himself, and then claim that it is ‘a part of Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa’; for the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa had by that time been universally recognized as an exemplary text on *dharma*, and Rāma as the ideal exemplar of *dharma*. By such means, the messages implicit in Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa were subverted, and ideas contrary to those of the genuine Rāmāyaṇa were presented as though they were endorsed by Righteous Rāma himself; note that the *U-K* contains no episodes of real interest except for the exile of Sītā by Rāma and the killing of Śambūka by Rāma.

§7.2 For the “ordinary”, common man the point at issue in the *U-K* episode was not Sītā’s chastity but whether a man should take back his wife who had lived for some time — whether voluntarily or involuntarily — in another man’s house. Such a woman’s chastity is open to suspicion; in Laṅkā, Sītā’s *agni-praveśa* proved her chastity. But she was not a mere human but goddess Lakṣmī herself, as the Devas declared. Therefore, simply because Sītā did an *agni-praveśa*, can it be prescribed that every married woman who had stayed for some time in another man’s house should undergo an *agni-praveśa* test? No ordinary human being will survive the *agni-praveśa* test. Therefore, the ordinary men felt that a wife who had been abducted and who had lived in another man’s house for some time should simply not be welcomed back into the family by her husband; and that this is the only way to ensure that no woman will go astray. This must have been the custom or law or norm even before Rāma’s time. (And it is regrettable that many in India have followed this norm, through many centuries down to the present.) For it is this law that Rāma seemingly relied on when he uttered words rejecting Sītā just prior to her *agni-praveśa*, even though he knew that Sītā was pure.²⁸⁶ Sītā protested against the Validity of that law²⁸⁷ and proved it to be a defective law by her entry into and subsequent emergence from the fire.

286 Rāma said harsh words to Sītā: 6.103.19: *kaḥ pumān hi kule jātaḥ striyaṃ paragrhoṣitām | tejasvī punar ādadyāt suhr̥llekhena cetasā ||*

287 6.104.5, 7: Sītā said to Rāma: *rūkṣaṃ śrāvayase vira prākṛtaḥ prākṛtām iva || ... | pṛthakstrīṇāṃ pracāreṇa jātiṃ tvam paśiṅkase ||*

§7.3 In the commoners' view, a king must obey and uphold the law, defined by the customs of the people; that is part of *rājadharmā*. But Rāma's concept of dharma transcended not only Kṣatriyadharmā but also rājadharmā. So when Sītā's *agni-praveśa* proved her chastity of which he had had no doubt at any time, he took her back, thinking that the world would only approve of his action.

§7.4 But, especially from the point of view of the commoners of Ayodhyā, the issue was not Sītā's purity, but that Rāma had violated a time-honoured custom or law and in so doing had caused them difficulty in regulating their family affairs. That is really the substance of their grievance against Rāma and it put Rāma in a very difficult situation. The custom or law or social norm in question could be changed only with the consensus of the society; but Rāma had not consulted his subjects on whether he should take back Sītā. When Rāma suggested that Sītā should do another *agni-praveśa*, it was not because he had any doubts about Sītā's purity but in order to impress the thousands of his subjects of all *varṇas*, and many distinguished rishis and kings and monkeys and bears and rākṣasas as well, who had gathered there to witness Sītā's śapatha and *agni-praveśa*²⁸⁸ — in order to vindicate his taking back Sītā. Indeed Vālmiki told Rāma, and the gathering, right at the beginning: "Sītā is pure . . . She was abandoned by you, *O great upholder of the law*, out of fear for your reputation."²⁸⁹ Rāma then acknowledged to Vālmiki (and to the gathering) that he had always known that Sītā was pure, that he had made a bad mistake in sending Sītā away and he begged to be forgiven.²⁹⁰ Apparently, he wanted the assembly to declare that it was a mistake to have sent Sītā away and that he should welcome her back.

§7.5 Sītā probably wanted to teach the common people that it was wrong to demand that anyone should undergo an *agni-praveśa* in order

288 See U-K, 87.1-7.

289 U-K, 87.14-15: Vālmiki said: *iyam dāśarathe sītā suvatā dharmacārīṇī | apāpā te parityaktā mamāśramasamīpataḥ || lokopavādabhīṭasya tava rāma mahāvratā | pratyayaṃ dāsyate sītā . . . ||* I take the appropriate meaning of the word 'mahāvratā' here to be 'great upholder of the law.'

290 U-K, 88.3: *pratyayo hi purā datto vaidehyā surasannidhau | seyaṃ lokabhayād brahman apāpā ity abhijānatā | parityaktā mayā sītā tad bhavān kṣantum arhati ||*

to prove one's purity; she probably wanted to teach the people that a woman, rescued from her abduction, should be welcomed back into the family. She swore, and proved her purity in an astonishing way. She did not do an *agni-praveśa*, but, on the strength of her purity, invoked Mother Earth and disappeared into the earth with her.

Characterization of Rāma

§8.0 The character of the Rāma of the *U-K* is strikingly inconsistent with that of the Rāma of Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa. The behaviour of the Rāma of the *U-K* is like that of Rāvaṇa, or even worse.

§8.1 It is true that people would not like to have a king whose wife's character was not above suspicion, for people would feel that such a king will be corrupted by having a corrupt wife; and they would also like their king to follow time-honoured customs and laws. The *U-K* says that Rāma decided to send Sītā into exile because he heard reports that there were *widespread* rumours among the people of Ayodhyā strongly disapproving of his taking back Sītā as his wife, although she had spent nearly a year in Rāvaṇa's custody. Rāma knew that Sītā was most chaste and pure and blemishless; he knew also that the people expressed no suspicion or complaint about Sītā or her character, but only about his action in taking her back. After sending Sītā into exile, Rāma continued to rule as king for several years.

But we know that the Rāma of the Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa did not always feel obliged to act according to the people's wishes. To fulfil his father's promise to Kaikeyī, he was determined to go into exile. As he set out for the forest, the people pleaded with him, most pitifully, to return to Ayodhyā. But Rāma did not heed to their pleadings.²⁹¹

§8.2 Some people argue that it is a king's *Kṣatriyadharma* requires not only that his queen should be above all suspicion, but also that the king should also uphold established customs and laws, and that it was for that reason that the Rāma of the *U-K* arranged for Sītā to be abandoned in the forest although he knew that she was absolutely pure and innocent — and

291 See: 2.40.11–29; 2.41.18, etc.

pregnant at the same time. But such action by Rāma would be a typical instance of *Kṣatriyadharma* where righteousness and unrighteousness go hand in hand — and it is precisely this kind of *dharma* that the Rāma of Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa had rejected. He had said, *more than once*, that his concept of *dharma* transcended the Kṣatriya code – a code that he rejected, describing it as a code “where unrighteousness and a little bit of righteousness go together, a code that is followed only by vile, greedy and wicked men of sinful deeds”.²⁹²

§8.3 In acting according to the defective *Kṣatriyadharma* that had been resolutely rejected by the Rāma of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa, the Rāma of the *U-K* behaves very unlike the Rāma of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa who had declared that it was not for earthly wealth that he cared to live in this world, and that, like a ṛṣi (Rishi), he cared only for *dharma*, righteousness.²⁹³ The action of the Rāma of the *U-K* shows him to have been keen on enjoying the good opinion of his subjects and also on retaining the kingship; it shows him also as totally lacking any sense of justice or compassion: he did not even tell his pregnant wife that he was abandoning her, and why. Rāvaṇa too was proud of his kingship, wealth and glory and enjoyed the good opinion of his Rākṣasa subjects but had no sense of justice, nor any respect for women.²⁹⁴ That is, the *Uttarakāṇḍa*'s portrayal of Rāma is rather like that of Rāvaṇa and is very unlike the portrayal of Rāma in Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa.

§8.4 The Rāma of Vālmikī's Rāmāyaṇa never demanded that any one should accept his decisions meekly and unquestioningly. He was willing — indeed, he welcomed — dissent and debate. This can be seen from his discussions with Kausalyā and Lakṣmaṇa when they wanted him not

292 2.18.36: Rāma admonishes Lakṣmaṇa: *tad enām viśrja anāryāṃ kṣatra-dharmāśritāṃ matim | dharmam āśraya mā taikṣṇyaṃ mad buddhir anugamyatām ||* Also, Rāma says in 2.101.20: *kṣātraṃ dharmam ahaṃ tyakṣye hy adharamaṃ dharmasaṃhitam | kṣudrair nṛṣaṃsair lubdhaiś ca sevitaṃ pāpakarmabhiḥ ||*

293 2.16.46: *nāham arthaparo devi lokam āvastum utsahe | viddhi mām ṛṣibhis tulyaṃ vimalaṃ dharmam āśritam ||*

294 Rāvaṇa considered all women as merely sexual objects and indeed as fair prey to satisfy his lust: e.g. in 5.18.5 he tells Sītā: *svadharmo rakṣasāṃ bhīru sarvathaiṣa na saṃśayaḥ | gamanaṃ vā parastrīṇāṃ haraṇaṃ saṃpramathya vā ||* The *U-K* has many episodes of Rāvaṇa's violation of women.

to go exile, and also from his discussions with Sītā and with Lakṣmaṇa when they each wanted to accompany him to the forest. The behaviour of the Rāma of the *U-K* is in strong contrast: he sternly ordered his brothers from offering any discussion whatsoever on his decision to abandon Sītā in the *tapovana* beyond the borders of the kingdom.²⁹⁵ We note that the Rāma of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* had accepted with gratitude the advice that Lakṣmaṇa gave him from time to time, and praised it as excellent.²⁹⁶ He had welcomed and praised the advice from Sugrīva also.²⁹⁷ On the other hand, faced with a serious situation the Rāma of the *U-K* not only did not seek the advice of Lakṣmaṇa or any others, but sternly warned them against offering any comment. His behaviour is similar to that of Rāvaṇa who, driven by lust upon hearing Śūrpaṇakhā's description of Sītā, did not want to consult his ministers and advisors, but dismissed them and decided to abduct Sītā.²⁹⁸ The warning Rāma issued to his brothers is similar to Rāvaṇa's scolding his uncle Mārīca for advising him against abducting Sītā, and similar to his admonition to Mārīca that he should speak only when asked and that even then he should not criticize his king.²⁹⁹ Indeed, the behaviour of the Rāma of the *U-K* forbidding any comment from his brothers is much worse than that of Rāvaṇa who several times did allow Vibhīṣaṇa to advise him to return Sītā to Rāma, even though the advice was not to Rāvaṇa's liking. This was even before Hanumān returned from Laṅkā to Kiṣkindhā.³⁰⁰ Even on

295 *U-K*, 44.18: Rāma told his brothers: *na cāsmi prativaktavyaḥ sītāṃ prati kathaṃcana | aprītiḥ paramā mahyaṃ bhavet tu prativārite ||*

296 See in particular 3.63.1, 3: *pūrvajo 'py uktamātras tu lakṣmaṇena subhāṣitam | sāragrāhī mahāsāraṃ pratijagrāha rāghavaḥ || kiṃ kariṣyāvahe vatsa kva vā gacchāva lakṣmaṇa | kenopāyena paśyāvaḥ sītāṃ iti vicintaya || 4.26.15-17: lakṣmaṇasya tu tad vākyam pratipūjya hitaṃ śubham | rāghavaḥ suhrdaṃ snigdham idaṃ vacanam abravīt || vācyam yad anuraktena snigdhenā ca hitena ca | satyavikramayuktena tad uktam lakṣmaṇa tvayā || eṣa śokaḥ parityaktaḥ sarvakāryāvasādakaḥ | vikrameṣv apratihataṃ tejaḥ protsāhayāmy aham ||*

297 Comforted by Sugrīva's advice, Rāma thanked him and praised him. 4.7.17: *eṣa ca prakṛtistho 'ham anunītas tvayā sakhe | durlabho hīdṛso bandhur asmin kāle viśeṣataḥ ||*

298 3.33.1: *sacivān abhyānujñāya kāryaṃ buddhvā jagāma ha ||*

299 Rāvaṇa tells Mārīca: 3.38.9: *saṃprṣṭena tu vaktavyaṃ sacivena vipaścītā | 3.38.14: guṇadoṣau na prcchāmi kṣamaṃ cātmani rākṣasa ||*

300 5.35.9: Sītā tells Hanumān: *vibhīṣaṇena ca bhrātrā mama niryātanaṃ prati | anunītaḥ prayatnena na ca tat kurute matim ||*

the eve of the arrival of Rāma and Sugrīva and others in Lankā, Rāvaṇa allowed Vibhīṣaṇa to repeat his advice again and again, although at the end of it he, Rāvaṇa, was overcome by anger and cursed and execrated his brother.³⁰¹ We see then that the behaviour of Rāma of the *U-K* who ordered his brothers to voice no comment is most unlike that of the Rāma of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* and is in fact much worse than that of Rāvaṇa.

§8.5 In the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa*, whenever Rāma fell into sorrow or anger or despair, Lakṣmaṇa or Sugrīva would remonstrate with him and ask him to stop behaving like an 'ordinary' uncultured (*prākṛta*) man; Rāma would then recover his normal composure and express his appreciation of them.³⁰² On the other hand, the Rāma of the *U-K* acknowledged that he had "fallen into the ocean of sorrow,"³⁰³ and yet strictly forbade his brothers from making any comment on his decision to exile Sītā.

§8.6 The Rāma of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* is portrayed not only as most truthful but also as loving his wife Sītā so much that he could never leave her behind or abandon her; he himself says that she was dear to him as his own life, indeed even dearer than his own life and that he could not live without her even for a short while. Even the Rākṣasas Mārīca and Rāvaṇa said the same of Rāma.³⁰⁴ *Vālmiki* also declared that for Rāma, Sītā was dearer than life itself.³⁰⁵ Whereas the Rāma of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* had declared before the assembled Devas themselves that he can never abandon Sītā,³⁰⁶ the Rāma of the *U-K* arranged for the

301 6.10.11: Rāvaṇa tells Vibhīṣaṇa: *anyastv evaṃ vidhaṃ brūyāt vākyam etan niśacara | asmin muhūrte na bhavet tvāṃ tu dhik kulapāṃsanam ||*

302 See 3.62.1: *taṃ tathā śokasamṭaptaṃ vilapantam anāthavat | ... || tataḥ saumitrir āśvāsyā muhūrtād iva lakṣmaṇaḥ | rāmaṃ sambodhayāmāsa ... ||* 3.62.13: *śocitum nārhaṣe vīra yathānyaḥ prākṛtas tathā ||* 3.63.1, 3: *pūrvajo 'py uktamātras tu lakṣmaṇena subhāṣitam | sāragrāhī mahāsāraṃ pratijagrāha rāghavaḥ | ... rāmo lakṣmaṇam abravīt || kiṃ kariṣyāvahe vatsa kva vā gacchāva lakṣmaṇa | kenopāyena paśyeyaṃ sītām iti vicintaya ||* 4.26.9, 12: *alaṃ vīra vyathāṃ gatvā na tvaṃ śocitum arhasi | ... samunmūlaya śokaṃ tvaṃ vyavasāyaṃ sthiraṃ kuru |*
See also 3.61.9ff, etc.

303 Rāma describes himself: *U-K* 44.14: *tasmād bhavantaḥ paśyantu patitaṃ śokasāgare |*

304 See for instance 2.27.27; 3.56.4; 3.35.19; 3.38.6; 3.59.24; 3.63.26.

305 4.26.6: *Vālmiki* says that to Rāma, Sītā was dearer than life: "*prāṇebhyo 'pi garīyasī*".

306 6.106.18: Rāma tells Agni and other devas: *na hi hātum iyaṃ śakyā kīrtir ātmavatā yathā ||*

abandonment of Sītā, did not even have any discussion whatsoever with her about it, and continued to rule as king for many years as though nothing had happened. We see that the behaviour of the Rāma of the *U-K* is in sharp contrast with that of the Rāma of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa*.

§8.7 Also, for quite some years the Rāma of the *U-K* seems to have had no curiosity about the fate of his wife Sītā who had been banished from his kingdom, nor about the fate of the baby/babies, he had fathered through her. His behaviour is in strong contrast to that of the Rāma of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* who was madly in love with his wife, was most compassionate and was also devoted to righteousness — a righteousness that transcended mere *Kṣatriyadharma*.

§9.1 The Śambūka story blames a Śūdra's *tapas* for a Brahmin boy's death hundreds of miles away. It takes the stand that the Śūdra deserved to be killed for his 'offence' and it gloats that the Brahmin boy came back to life when Rāma beheaded the Śūdra. But the story is contradictory to the spirit of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and is apparently the creation, not of *Vālmiki* but, at a later date, of some extreme conservative person. For, the story not only contradicts what the *Rāmāyaṇa* says more than once, that during Rāma's reign there were no child deaths,³⁰⁷ but it also contradicts what the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* says about śūdras performing *tapas*. The *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* refers to a young Śūdra (the son of a Śūdra woman), as well as a Śūdra woman (Śabarī) as ascetics engaged in *tapas* (2.57.18, 20, 37; 3.70.7). In the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa*, both Rāma and *Vālmiki* refer to Guha, of the lowly hunter tribe, as Rāma's friend dear to him as his own self (*ātmasamaḥ sakhā*).³⁰⁸ The feeling was not one-sided condescension; for instance, when Rāma met with Guha, the latter took the initiative and embraced Rāma. This shows that in the days described by *Vālmiki* there was no distinction based on sex, *jāti*, *varṇa*, or race etc. Rāma's first words to Śabarī, a Śūdra woman, of the "lowly" hunter tribe, were to enquire whether her *tapas* was proceeding well ³⁰⁹ without

307 1.1.72: *na putramaraṇaṃ kecid drakṣyanti puruṣāḥ kvacit* |
6.116.85: *na ca sma vṛddhā bālānāṃ pretakāryāṇi kurvate* ||

308 2.44.9: *Vālmiki* says: *tatra rājā guho nāma rāmasya ātmasamaḥ sakhā* | In 6.113.5 Rāma himself refers to Guha as his *ātmasamaḥ sakhā*.

309 3.70.7: *kaccit te nirjitā vighnāḥ kaccit te vardhate tapah* |

hindrance from anybody. Rāma looked upon everybody equally, making no distinction based on sex, *varṇa*, *jāti* ("caste") or even race.³¹⁰ Among those he revered were his dearest friends were Śabarī and Guha, both of them of the hunter tribe, the vulture Jaṭāyu, the monkeys Sugrīva and Hanumān, and the rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa. Finally, in regard to the *U-K* story of Rāma killing the śūdra ascetic Śambūka, we first note that Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa says that Daśaratha realized that he had committed a *great sin* (*mahatpāpam*) when he had *unwittingly* killed a śūdra practitioner of *tapas*³¹¹ and, as the Śūdra ascetic's father reminded Daśaratha, it would have been a far greater sin if the killing had been intentional.³¹² Certainly, Daśaratha's son Rāma, described as righteous and learned, and who showed such high regard for the Śūdra *tapasvinī* Śabarī and looked upon the *niṣāda* Guha as his *ātmasamaḥ sakhā*, would not have *intentionally* killed the Śūdra ascetic Śambūka for performing *tapas*. We see then that the Rāma of Śambūka story cannot be the Rāma of the Rāmāyaṇa and the story is certainly not by Vālmiki.

§ 9.2 Thus we find that the *U-K* repeatedly paints a picture of Rāma that is very different from the picture of Rāma in Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa and one can only conclude that Vālmiki could not have been the author of the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*, and that the *U-K* cannot be a part of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa.

Characterization of Sītā

§10.1 The Sītā of the *U-K* is portrayed as a weak and submissive person, meekly accepting her exile ordered by her husband even though she has done no wrong, was faithful and devoted to him and was free of all blame.³¹³ She neither questioned, nor argued or protested her husband's

310 More than a thousand years later, Tirumaṅgai Ālvār would sing about this with wondrous admiration and love (see *Periya Tirumoli* 5.8.1).

311 Daśaratha tells Kausalyā: 2.58.1: *tad ajñānāt mahatpāpam kṛtvā* . . .

312 2.58.20: *kṣatriyeṇa vadho rājan vānaprasthe viśeṣataḥ | jñānapūrvam kṛtaḥ sthānāt cyāvayed api vajriṇam ||*

313 We can see clearly in some of the interpolations made, as to how the *U-K* was utilized to preach that a wife should gladly accept whatever treatment she gets from her husband. For instance, one interpolation says that Sītā cried sorrowfully and told Lakṣmaṇa who left her in the *tapovana*, across the Ganges and beyond the kingdom

action. The *U-K* thus portrays Sītā as accepting that a husband may treat his wife however harshly and unjustly as he pleases, and that his wife should meekly accept such treatment.

But that is not how the Sītā of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa is portrayed by Vālmiki. As soon as Rāma told her that he was going to the forest and that she should remain in Ayodhyā (2.23.34), she protested angrily (2.24.1: *saṃkrুদ্ধā*). Rāma persisted and told her, “You must stay here and do your duty . . . You must do as I say” (2.25.2–3: *iha ācara svadharmaṃ tvaṃ mā yathā manasaḥ sukham || site yathā tvāṃ vakṣyāmi tathā kāryaṃ tvayā abale* |). He went on to cite the dangers of life in the forest. Then Sītā angrily asked him, “Did my father give me in marriage to a woman with the body of a man?” (2.27.3). Sowe see that the Sītā of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa did not meekly accept whatever her husband said.

Later too in the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa, Sītā is portrayed as brave and strong. After she was abducted by Rāvaṇa, she was offered enticements and threats, by Rāvaṇa himself and by the Rākṣasis guarding her, but she spurned them all.³¹⁴ Later still when Rāvaṇa had been killed and Rāma uttered words rejecting her, she forcefully argued against his reasoning (that an abducted woman should not be welcomed back into the family); she publicly rebuked him for speaking like an uncultured person, and she proved that Rāma was wrong, by herself doing an *agni-praveśa* and emerging gloriously out of the fire.

That is how the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa portrays the fortitude of Sītā. But we saw that the Sītā of the *U-K* is portrayed as weak and submissive, meekly accepting her unjust banishment by Rāma.

of Ayodhyā, to convey to Rāma her obeisance and that she said that “the husband alone is the wife’s deity, relative and *guru*, and dearer than life” — a statement which can be interpreted only as meek subservience to the husband. See CE 7. 888*, line 1: Words attributed to Sītā: *patir hi daivatam nāryāḥ patir bandhuḥ patir gatiḥ* || The interpolation of this passage at this juncture is significant, even though similar statements were made by the ascetic Anasūyā and by Sītā herself during their meeting. See: 2.109.24, 2.110.3–5.

314 3. *Sargas* 53–54; 5. *sargas* 18–21, etc. I totally disagree with Velchuri Narayana Rao (2004: p. 223) who says that the Sītā of the *Sundara-kāṇḍa* is “weak” but “skilful in prodding her man to become the hero he has to be” and that it is she who makes Rāma the warrior and punisher of demons.

§10.2 The fact that the Sītā of the *U-K* was pregnant when she learnt of her exile should have really added to her strength; but the *U-K* portrays her as a weakling without any spirit, and as practically thanking Rāma for abandoning her. Thus, we see that the Sītā of the *U-K* is totally unlike the Sītā of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa*.

Characterization of Lakṣmaṇa

§11.1 Let us compare the portrayal of Lakṣmaṇa in the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* and in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. The Lakṣmaṇa of *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa* is a devoted son and a devoted brother. But he had strong feelings that he expressed freely, and would not blindly accept what a person of authority says, whether it be a king, a father or an elder brother. He was furious that his father, the king Daśaratha, had given boons to Kaikeyī as a result of which Rāma was to go into exile; he was ready to depose Daśaratha by force of arms; and he expressed his anger against his elder brother Rāma for meekly accepting exile as his “fate”.³¹⁵

§11.2 In the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa*, whenever Rāma fell into despair, Lakṣmaṇa, though he was the younger brother, used to chide him, comfort him and give him advice; and Rāma appreciated receiving such advice.³¹⁶ Verses 3.60.52 and 3.61.1 describe Rāma as overcome by great sorrow and rage at the loss of Sītā, and was prepared to destroy all the worlds; Lakṣmaṇa’s words of advice calmed him; Rāma acknowledged the value of the advice and indeed asked for further advice as to what they should do next (3.63.1, 3).³¹⁷ In the *Yuddha-Kāṇḍa* of the *Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa*, Lakṣmaṇa could not bear to hear Rāma’s harsh words rejecting Sītā and looked angrily at Rāma; and he lit the fire for Sītā’s *agni-praveśa* only after reading a reassuring message in Rāma’s face [namely, that Rāma

315 2.19.19: (Rāma said): *kaścīd daivena saumitre yoddhum utsahate pumān ;*
2.20.11: (Lakṣmaṇa replied): *viklavo vīryhīno yaḥ sa daivam anuvartate | vīrāḥ*
sambhāvītātmāno na daivam paryupāsate ||

316 See e.g. 2.19.19; 2.20.11; 2.47.30; 3.62.1, 13; 4.26.12–17.

317 According to some versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, once when Rāma was sunk in despair and was about to discharge an arrow that would have wrought great havoc in the world, Lakṣmaṇa simply grabbed the bow from Rāma’s hand, chided him and calmed him. See 6. 244* lines 3–4 [6.21.33]: *saumitrir utpatya viniśvasantaṃ mā meti coktvā dhanur ālalambe ||*

knew that Sītā was pure and that Sītā will not be hurt by the fire but emerge from it with great glory].³¹⁸

§11.3 The behaviour of the Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa of the *U-K* is in striking contrast with that of the Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa of the *Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa*. The Rāma of the *U-K* announced his decision to banish Sītā whom he knew to be blameless, afraid that otherwise, his subjects would speak ill of him; he admitted that he was sunk in sorrow (*U-K* 44.10–14). But instead of seeking the advice of Lakṣmaṇa and his other brothers as the Rāma of the *Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa* would have done, the Rāma of the *U-K* ordered them not to make any comments on his decision (*U-K* 44.18), and ordered Lakṣmaṇa to ferry Sītā out of the country — and the Lakṣmaṇa of the *U-K* uttered not a word in protest, but meekly carried out Rāma's order.

The behaviour of the Lakṣmaṇa of the *U-K* is in sharp contrast with that of the Lakṣmaṇa of *Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa* proper. The Lakṣmaṇa of *Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa* proper had expressed his virulent condemnation of his father King Daśaratha's action leading to Rāma's banishment; in particular he said that he knew of no crime committed by Rāma, nor of any fault of Rāma's that would justify the banishment (2.52.18: *kenāyaṃ aparādhena rājaputro vivāSītāḥ*). Even Rāma could not fully pacify him, for not long afterwards Lakṣmaṇa sent a stinging message to Daśaratha through Sumantra, saying that Rāma's banishment was a rash and perverse act and that he, Lakṣmaṇa disowned the king as his father (2.52.21: *ahaṃ tāvaṃ mahārāje pitṛtvam nopalakṣaye*).

But in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, when Rāma announced his decision to banish Sītā even though (by his own admission) he knew her to be totally blameless, Lakṣmaṇa raised no protest whatever and meekly carried out the banishment of Sītā. The *U-K* does not say that Lakṣmaṇa cast not the slightest angry or disapproving look at his brother. He meekly took Sītā to the forest, told her she was being abandoned, and left her there. This is not what one would expect of the Lakṣmaṇa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* proper,

318 See the chapter on *Sītā's agni-praveśa*.

who has been described above and who regarded Sītā as his mother and as a deity to be worshipped.³¹⁹

§11.4 In acting as described above, the Lakṣmaṇa of the *U-K* thus failed in his duty as advisor to his brother. *Vālmiki's* Rāmāyaṇa stresses again and again that it is the duty of a king's counsellor to advise the king against following a wrong course of action, whatever may be the cost of offering the advice; it does so through the words of Mārīca to Rāvaṇa,³²⁰ through the repeated advice of Vibhīṣaṇa to Rāvaṇa and through the words of Hanumān who tells King Sugrīva, "a counsellor must put aside fear and tell the king what is good for him" and gives him sharp advice.³²¹ Mārīca, and later on Vibhīṣaṇa use identical words and tell King Rāvaṇa that there are plenty of people who will say things that are pleasing to the ear, and rare is the person who would give proper advice even if it be not pleasant to hear; and that likewise, rare is the person who would listen to such advice; but that *it is the duty of a good counsellor to advise what is good, even if it be unpleasant to hear*;³²² since both Mārīca and Vibhīṣaṇa use identical words, it would appear that they were quoting a well known maxim. Both Mārīca and Vibhīṣaṇa gave proper advice to Rāvaṇa, even though they knew that it would invite his wrath: Mārīca advised him against abducting Sītā, and Vibhīṣaṇa advised him, repeatedly, that Sītā should be returned to Rāma. Of course, in both cases, Rāvaṇa reacted with great anger.³²³ However, the Lakṣmaṇa of the *U-K* did not offer even one word of advice or protest to Rāma on the latter's decision to exile

319 2.35.8: Lakṣmaṇa's mother Sumitrā told him: *rāmaṃ daśarathaṃ viddhi mām viddhi janakātmajām* | Also, Sītā said of Lakṣmaṇa to Hanumān: 5.36.46: *pitṛvad vartate rāme mātṛvaṃ mām samācaran*; 3.43.26: Lakṣmaṇa tells Sītā, "*daivatam bhavati mama*."

320 3.39.7: *amātyaiḥ kāmavṛtto hi rājā kāpatham āśritaḥ* | *nigrāhyaḥ sarvathā sadbhiḥ sa nigrāhyo na grhyase* ||

321 4.31.18: Hanumān said to King Sugrīva: *niyuktair mantribhir vācya avaśyaṃ pārthivo hitam* | *ata eva bhayaṃ tyaktvā bravīmy avadhṛtaṃ vacaḥ* ||

322 Both Mārīca in 3.35.2 and Vibhīṣaṇa in 6.10.16 use identical words: *sulabhāḥ puruṣā rājan satataṃ priyavādināḥ* | *apriyasya ca pathyasya vaktā śrotā ca durlabhāḥ* ||

323 3.38.9: Rāvaṇa admonished Mārīca: *saṃprṣṭena tu vaktavyaṃ sacivena vipaścitā* | 6.10.11: Rāvaṇa scolds and insults Vibhīṣaṇa: *anyastv evaṃvidhaṃ brūyāt vākyaṃ vākyaṃ etan niśācara* | *asmin muhūrte na bhavet tvām tu dhik kulapāmsanam* ||

Śītā — so unlike the Lakṣmaṇa of the Rāmāyaṇa who did not heŚītāte to question or to advice against what Rāma intended to do.

§11.5 In the Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa, when Rāma said that it was only due to fate that he has to go into exile and that no one is capable of contesting fate, Lakṣmaṇa angrily retorted that only the weak and cowardly submit to fate;³²⁴ but the Lakṣmaṇa of the *U-K* says that Śītā's having had to go into exile was due to fate, that fate cannot be conquered and that Rāma, a "tiger among men", should simply accept Śītā's exile as his fate, for the brave do not sorrow over their fate.³²⁵ Thus, the behaviour of the Lakṣmaṇa of the *U-K* is again seen to be very unlike that of the Lakṣmaṇa of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa.

§11.6 We see then that the author of the *U-K* portrays not only Rāma and Śītā, but also Lakṣmaṇa in a manner inconsistent with Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa.

§12 Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa portrays some women as strong and evil, like Tātakā and Śūrpaṇakhā; and it portrays many more women as strong and noble, or as great ascetics, or as extremely wise, like Kuśanābhā's daughters, and Anasūyā, Svayamprabhā, Śabarī, Tārā, Maṇḍodarī, Vibhīṣaṇa's wife Saramā, and, of course, Śītā herself. *No woman* is portrayed as weak; no woman is portrayed as forcibly violated by any one (except by Rāvaṇa). The *U-K* on the other hand portrays women as weak; Vedavatī was a noble ascetic, but, unable to stand up against Rāvaṇa, immolated herself; many were the women who were forcibly violated by Rāvaṇa. Śītā is also portrayed as weak and submissive. This again suggests that the *U-K* is not by Vālmīki.

§13 There are also other inconsistencies and defects in the *U-K* story of *Śītā-parityāga*. The story ignores the question of justice for Śītā.

324 Rāma says: 2.19.13: *kṛtāntas tveva saumitre draṣṭavyo matpravāsane* | 2.19.19: *kaścid daivena saumitre yoddhum utsahate pumān* | Lakṣmaṇa retorts: 2.20.11: *viklavo vīryahino yaḥ sa daivam anuvartate* |

325 Lakṣmaṇa says to Sumantra: *U-K* 49.4: *vyaktaṃ daivād ahaṃ manye rāghavasya vinābhavam* | *vaidehyā sārathē sārḍhaṃ daivam hi duratikramam* || Lakṣmaṇa tells Rāma: *U-K* 51.9: *mā śucaḥ puruṣavyāghra kālasya gatir idṛśī* | *tvadvidhā na hi śocanti sattvavanto manasvināḥ* ||

The Rāma of the Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa is described as righteous and most compassionate towards all. But the Rāma of the *U-K* showed no concern for the rights and the welfare of Sītā and her then yet-to-be-born babies. And it was not righteous of him to condemn Sītā to exile on the basis of rumours that he knew to be false and were critical of *his* action of taking her back; and he exiled Sītā without giving her an opportunity to say anything — indeed without even telling her that she was to be exiled, and what for — and refusing to allow anyone to speak against his decision to exile her. In a matter that touched him personally, justice requires that the Rāma of the *U-K* should have consulted his advisors — his brothers and other ministers and Vasiṣṭha and Bharadvāja and others — but he did not. This contrasts with his behaviour when an aged Brahmin appeared before him in his court and complained that during Rāma's reign his young son had died prematurely — that is, that the boy's death was due to some fault of Rāma's (7.64.9); Rāma then consulted with his advisors and ministers.

§14 The *U-K* story of Sītā's banishment to the forest give rise to a number of questions for which it contains no answer. For instance, where is the justice for Sītā in that story? Is not the life and welfare and the rights of Sītā and her then yet-to-be-born babies entitled to the same concern that Rāma, who is described in the Rāmāyaṇa proper as most compassionate, showed towards others? It was Rāma himself who had taught Sītā that compassion is one's greatest *dharma*, as Sītā asked Hanumān to remind him (5.36.34: ānṛṣaṃsyam paro dharmas tvatta eva mayā śrutah). In a matter that touched him personally, how can Rāma the "righteous" assume the role of prosecutor and judge and condemn Sītā to banishment without giving her an opportunity to say anything — indeed without even letting her know of her "punishment" (exile), or even what she is exiled for, till her banishment had been carried out? There are other points to be noted too. Sītā cannot be banished without people noticing her absence and raising questions. Indeed, if Rāma wanted to transform the widespread disapproval of the people that triggered his order to exile Sītā into approval, he would have had to give wide publicity to his exiling her. Did the people approve of his action?

The *U-K* does not say. What did the wives of Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna say? Did King Janaka keep quiet? And did Vasiṣṭa and Agastya and Bharadvāja also keep quiet? And of course Rāma's ministers and other courtiers and the general public — did they condemn, condone or congratulate Rāma on his action? Why did not Rāma go to the sages Vasiṣṭa, Agastya, Viśvāmitra or Bharadvāja for advice? Why did not Daśaratha consult his council of ministers, as he did in the Śambūka story? The *U-K* has no answer to these and many other questions too. The plot of the *U-K* is very weak and full of holes, unlike that of the Rāmāyaṇa proper. It is therefore no wonder that so many poets like Bhavabhūti and Kālidāsa and others felt at liberty to modify the story of Sītā's banishment in many different ways.

III. Is the *U-K* a source of critical information?

§15.1 The *Uttara-kāṇḍa*, which reads like a purāṇa, really adds little or no information that is relevant for the story of Rāma. Almost all the details it gives about Rāmāyaṇa personages are already found in the Rāmāyaṇa.³²⁶

§15.2 Sometimes the *U-K* gives "information" in a ridiculous fashion. For instance, it describes Anaraṇya as cursing Rāvaṇa that one of his descendants will kill him;³²⁷ this is somewhat similar to Kaṁsa being cursed that Devaki's eighth child would kill him. Kaṁsa then set about killing Devaki's children. But Rāvaṇa seems to have shown no interest in even learning about Anaraṇya's descendants, and not even of Rāma, who, while yet a boy, had killed Tāṭakā (mother of Mārīca, Rāvaṇa's uncle); indeed, Śūrpaṇakhā repeatedly berates Rāvaṇa for not having employed spies, who would have told him about Rāma, his prowess

326 For instance: (1) Rāvaṇa, son of Viśravas and half-brother of Kubera; (2) Rāvaṇa's boon from Brahmā; (3) Rāvaṇa's siblings Kumbhakarṇa, Vibhiṣaṇa and Śūrpaṇakhā; (4) Rāvaṇa's half-brothers Khara and Dūṣaṇa; (5) Rāvaṇa defeats Kubera and takes Puṣpaka; (6) Brahmā's boon to Kumbhakarṇa; (7) Vedavati's curse (8) Vālī, son of Indra; Sugrīva, son of Sūrya; Hanumān, son of Vāyu; (9) Hanumān's immunity from weapons; (10) Mandodari, daughter of Maya and married to Rāvaṇa; (11) Due to a curse, Rāvaṇa cannot forcibly violate any woman.

327 *U-K*, 19.24: *utpatsyate kule hy asmin ikṣvākūṇaṃ mahātmanām | rājā paramatejasvī yas te prāṇān hariṣyati ||*

and his actions; Mārīca berated him likewise and had to tell him about Rāma.³²⁸

§15.3 Another critical matter that the *U-K* does not explain is the following. It says that Indra prayed to Viṣṇu to wage war against Rāvaṇa and kill him, although they knew of Rāvaṇa's invincibility by the Devas and any other beings, other than men and monkeys (7.27.12, 19). *Sargas* 31–33 are on Rāvaṇa's defeat by Kārtavīrya Arjuna of Māhishmati, a man; *Sarga* 34 describes Rāvaṇa's humiliation by the monkey Vālī. This means that there were at least one mighty human and one mighty monkey — and perhaps there were more of them, and other beings too — who were neither Devas nor Asuras and who were capable of defeating Rāvaṇa. Why did not the Devas seek out such a man or monkey? After all, it would appear that they had at some time sought the help of Vālī himself; that is how Vālī was awarded the golden necklace by Indra. (4.23.28: Tārā said to Vālī: *yā dattā devarājena tava tuṣṭena saṃyuge*).

§15.4 Sometimes, the “information” given by the *U-K* is inconsistent. For instance, early in the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, Pulastya is praised most highly as a “brahmaṛṣi, possessing a great intellect and righteousness, a *dharmātmā* whose good qualities cannot be praised adequately.”³²⁹ Yet when his grandson Rāvaṇa was constantly harassing the Devas, Rishis, Yakṣas and Gandharvas, *Pulastya seems to have offered his grandson no advice or reprimand not to do so; nor does the U-K say that Pulastya reproached Rāvaṇa for his attempt to violate Vedavati*.³³⁰ Rāvaṇa forcibly carried off numerous other women too; his younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa condemned the abductions,³³¹ *but the U-K does not indicate that Pulastya ever*

328 Śūrpaṇakhā berates Rāvaṇa: see 12–3.31.5 and Mārīca: 5–3.35.3.

329 For instance, *U-K*, 2.4–7 describes Pulastya using the words *brahmaṛṣi*, *nānukīrtiyā guṇās tasya dharmataḥ*, *munipuṅgavaḥ* and *dharmātmā*.

330 *U-K* 13.8: ... *daśānanah | deva-ṛṣi-yakṣa-gandharvān bādhat sma sa nityaśaḥ ||* For the Vedavati episode, see *sarga* 17 of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*.

331 *U-K* 24.2–3: *darśanīyāṃ hi yāṃ rakṣaḥ kanyāṃ strīṃ vātha paśyati | hatvā bandhujanaṃ tasyā vimāne saṃnyaveśayat || tatra pannagayakṣāṇāṃ mānuṣāṇāṃ ca rakṣasāṃ | daityāṇāṃ dānavāṇāṃ ca kanyā jagrāha rāvaṇaḥ ||* *U-K* 25.20: Vibhīṣaṇa tells Rāvaṇa: *jñātīn vai dharṣayitvā imās tvayānītāḥ varāṅganāḥ |* The *Rāmāyaṇa* also says that Rāvaṇa violated the wives of many men: see e.g. 3.30.12: *ūcchettāraṃ ca dharmāṇāṃ paradārābhimarśanam*. Rāvaṇa himself boasts to Sītā that he has carried off numerous noble women from various places: 3.45.24: *bahvīnām uttamastriṇām*

came and admonished Rāvaṇa. Similarly, when Rāvaṇa forcibly violated Rambhā, the wife of his brother Kubera's son Naḷakūbara, and who therefore deserved to be treated as his daughter-in-law,³³² the *U-K* does not say that Pulastya condemned his grandson's action in any way. On the other hand, the *U-K* describes how Rāvaṇa went to pick up a fight with Arjuna (of Mahiṣmati), but suffered a humiliating defeat and was captured by Arjuna; that as soon as Pulastya heard of it, he rushed to request Arjuna to release Rāvaṇa and that Arjuna granted the request.³³³ But the *U-K* does not say that Pulastya gave his grandson Rāvaṇa any admonition or sobering advice whatsoever. We see that Pulastya, who tolerated without a murmur or disapproving word the heinous crimes of his evil grandson, is described by the *U-K* in glorious terms as a Brahmarṣi, possessing a great intellect, as a *dharmātmā* etc. This shows that the *U-K* is inconsistent and ineptly constructed and suggests that the *U-K* is not by Vālmīki.

§16.1 There are also instances where the *U-K* contradicts Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa. We have seen some instances in our discussion of the two stories that form the heart of the *U-K*. (Few more are given below.)

§16.2 (i) The *U-K* says that Sugrīva and other monkeys and bears stayed on in Ayodhyā for more than two months after Rāma's coronation; this is inconsistent with Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa which says that after witnessing Rāma's coronation and receiving various presents from Rāma at the end of it, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa and their companions returned to their abodes, that is, to Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā respectively),³³⁴ that is, it says that Sugrīva and others stayed in Ayodhyā only for a very short time after the coronation. Thus, the *U-K* again contradicts the Rāmāyaṇa.

āhṛtānām itas tataḥ | sarvāsāmeva bhadram te mamāgramahiṣī bhava || Similarly in 5.7.5, 5.10.22. He claims that as a rākṣasa he has every right to forcibly carry off any woman (see 5.18.5).

332 Rambhā pleaded repeatedly: *U-K* 26.21, 23: *dharmataś ca snuṣā te 'haṃ tattvam etad bravīmi te | ... dharmatas te sutasyāhaṃ bhāryā rākṣasapuṅgava ||*

333 See *U-K* 33.1–3, 16–17.

334 See *U-K* 38.15, 17. Cf. 6.116.76: *yathārhaṃ pūjītāḥ sarve kāmāi ratnaiś ca puṣkalaiḥ | prahṛṣṭamanasaḥ sarve jagmur eva yathāgatam ||*

(ii) The Rāma of the *U-K* refers to Sītā's *agni-praveśa* in Laṅkā and says that Sītā was restored to him by *Mahendra*,³³⁵ but the Rāmāyaṇa says that it was *Agni deva* who restored her.³³⁶

(iii) Another instance is the telling of the story of Ahalyā. The story is told in the *Bālakāṇḍa* itself, and there is no need for the *U-K* to give its version of the story. And the *U-K* version contradicts the version given by Vālmīki. Vālmīki says that Gautama cursed Indra to lose his testicles; but the *U-K* says that Gautama cursed Indra that he would be captured by his enemies.³³⁷

(iv) The *U-K* (*Sargas* 33–34) says that after his release by Arjuna, Rāvaṇa again in his foolish arrogance, went to Kiṣkindhā to challenge Vālī to a fight; but he was humiliated (even before a fight) by Vālī who caught him, kept him a prisoner in his armpit and went about his ablutions. The *U-K* says that Rāvaṇa then sought and made a friendship pact with Vālī and that he lived in Vālī's palace for a month, like the crown-prince Sugrīva.³³⁸

Now, during that month Sugrīva must have come to know a lot about Rāvaṇa. Yet, when Rāma met him in Rśyamūka, Sugrīva said he knew nothing whatever about Rāvaṇa – his power, valour or his family. Recall that Sugrīva is described as a *dharmātmā*, *mahātmā*, of good character, *satyasaṃdha* etc.³³⁹ This would mean that Sugrīva was not truthful in his denial. It suggests that the *U-K* statement quoted above contradicts Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa.

§17 The numerous instances where the *U-K* is inconsistent with the Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa and the spurious nature of the story of Sītā's exile to

335 *U-K* 44.8: Rāma of the *U-K* says: *laṅkādvīpe mahendreṇa mama haste niveśitā* | This contradicts what the Rāmāyaṇa says. See the next note.

336 6.106.3: The Rāmāyaṇa says: *dadau rāmāya vaidehīm aṅke kṛtvā vibhāvasuḥ* ||

337 Gautama cursed Indra: 1.47.26: *akartavyam idaṃ yasmād viphalas tvam bhaviṣyasi* || But the *U-K* gives: *U-K* 30.29: *tasmāt tvaṃ samare rājan śatruhaṣṭaṃ gamiṣyasi* ||

338 See *U-K* 34.42: *sa tatra māsam uṣitaḥ sugrīva iva rāvaṇaḥ*; *U-K* 36.37 says that when Rkṣrajās died, Vālī was made king and Sugrīva was made the crown prince: *pitṛye pade kṛto vālī sugrīvo vālīnaḥ pade* |

339 See e.g.: 3.69.26–32, 3.71.7; 4.2.4. (See also the Rāma–Sugrīva chapter.)

the forest and of the Śambūka story — almost the only important part of the *U-K* — shows that the *U-K* cannot be a part of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa, and that its author is not Vālmīki.

IV. On claims that the *U-K* should be considered to be a part of the Rāmāyaṇa

§18.1 Some scholars claim that the *U-K* is a “part of the Rāmāyaṇa tradition”;³⁴⁰ but they do not state clearly the sense in which they use the term ‘Rāmāyaṇa tradition.’ They seem to claim, in effect, that every ancient or modern piece of writing, or song or film, whether it is a sundry poem or a piece of creative fiction, or part of a politician’s diatribe, that speaks of a Rāma, Sītā or Rāvaṇa is part of the ‘Rāmāyaṇa tradition’ — even if only a microscopic minority of the people from which the writer comes have read or even heard of those writings. We examine the critics’ claim by considering how the *Sītā-parityāga* and Śambūka stories that form the heart of the *U-K* have been treated in works of the past 2000 years and more.

§18.2 We start with six early works, in chronological order, that mention neither of the two stories: (1) The *Rāmopākhyāna* (100 BCE?), a part of the *Mahābhārata*, gives the story of Rāma in 20 *Sargas*. Its authors knew the *U-K* [as it was in their time]. (2) The *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, the oldest extant purāṇa, contains a summary mentioning all the highpoints of the story of Rāma. (3–4) Bhāsa (300–400 CE) is probably the earliest playwright to write any play devoted exclusively to the story of Rāma. His plays *Pratimānāṭaka* and *Abhiṣekanāṭaka* are both generally faithful to the Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa, but neither of them contains anything from the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*. (5) Kumāradāsa (500–700 CE) ends *Jānakīharaṇa*, his story of Rāma, with the consecration of Rāma as king, and completely ignores the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*. (6) Bhaṭṭi (600–700 CE) in his *Rāvaṇavadha* (also known as *Bhaṭṭikāvya*) gives a summary of the Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa, but completely ignores the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*. (7) So does Bhavabhūti’s (700–800 CE) *Mahāvīracarita* on the story of Rāma. His *Uttararāmacarita* has little in common with either Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa or the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*. It makes skeletal references to the killing of Śambūka

340 See e.g. P Richman (1991: *Many Rāmāyaṇas*, p.8).

and the exile of Sītā, but it is mainly concerned with making changes to the latter story so that Rāma and Sītā are finally joyfully united. The point for us is that Bhavabhūti wrote two *distinct works*, one dealing with themes from the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa and the other dealing with themes from the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*, thus suggesting that in his opinion the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa and the *U-K* were distinct works. (8) Dīnnāga (Dhīranāga) (300–600 CE? 850–950 CE?): His *Kundanmālā* is said to be modelled on the *Uttararāmacarita* or was the model for it, and so need not be discussed separately. (9) The *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* of Śaktibhadra (800–900 CE) generally closely follows Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa, but with some minor deviations. It too omits the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*.³⁴¹ (10) So does the play *Anargharāghava* of Murāri (800–1000 CE).

§18.3 Kālidāsa's (400–500 CE) *Raghuvamśa* presents several tales of Raghu's (fictional) dynasty, as well as about Rāma and his descendants. Its primary focus is not Rāma, and it gives creative versions of the Sītā-parityāga and Śambūka stories of the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*. But this only shows that Kālidāsa was aware of those stories, and it does not mean that he considered them to be part of Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa. In any event, we see that for 2000 years or more after Vālmiki, the Sanskrit works dealing primarily with the story of Rāma either ignore the *U-K* or treat it as a work distinct from the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa.

§18.4 Let us now look at three examples of how the Rāma story was, and is, handled in the regional languages of India. The most significant as well as the most ancient of the Rāmāyaṇa texts is the epic poem *Irāmāvatāram* (popularly known as *Kamba-Rāmāyaṇam*) of Kamban (800–1000 CE) in over ten thousand verses in Tamil. For centuries it has been, and continues to be, *THE* Rāmāyaṇa for the people of Tamil Nāḍu, where less than about three per cent of the population knows Sanskrit (or Hindi). It follows Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa fairly closely and gives a fine poetic treatment of the narrative. It is divided into six parts, corresponding exactly to the six kāṇḍas of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa. It ends with Rāma's return to Ayodhyā and his consecration as the king and completely ignores the *U-K*.

341 J L Brockington (1984): p. 247.

§18.5 The oldest Rāma-kathā in Telugu is the *Sri Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa* by Gona Buddhareddy, said to have been composed around 1240 C.E. It too ends with the coronation of Rāma and has no material from the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*.

Viswanatha Satyanarayana, a 20th century Telugu poet is the author of *Rāmāyaṇa kalpavṛkṣamu*, immensely popular among the Telugu-speaking people; the author even received the prestigious *Jñānāgni-praveśaīṭha* award. It too follows Vālmīki, and has no material from the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*.

Thus, the most popular Rāma-kathā texts in a large part of South India reject the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*.

§18.6 The situation in regard to North India is not different. The *Rāmacaritamānasa* of Tulsi Das in Avadhi (popular rural Hindi) is *THE* Rāmāyaṇa for hundreds of millions of people in North India and for the Hindu diaspora in the Caribbean and elsewhere; it too ignores the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*.

§18.7 The story of the earliest Rāmāyaṇa in Assamese has a history that is shrouded in some mystery. One version is that Mādhava Kāṇḍali in the 14th century wrote (in Assamese) only the five kāṇḍas *Ayodhyā* to *Yuddha kāṇḍa* and that Śaṅkaradeva and his disciple Mādhavadeva appended to it the *U-K* and the *Bāla-kāṇḍa* respectively. Significantly, the augmented text is called the *Saptakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* ("Rāmāyaṇa with seven kāṇḍas"). Śaṅkaradeva's *Uttarā-kāṇḍa* is an extreme distortion of the Sanskrit *Uttara-kāṇḍa*.³⁴²

There are two points worthy of note here. *One*, If Mādhava Kāṇḍali did not include the *Bāla-* and *Uttara-Kāṇḍas* in his narration of the Rāma-

342 W L Smith's claim that it is based on the Sanskrit *U-K* and "depends on Vālmīki and Vālmīki alone" (where he assumes that Vālmīki is the author of the Sanskrit *Uttara-kāṇḍa*) is incorrect. See William L Smith (1994). Curiously, Smith seems to mistake Bhavabhūti for Vālmīki; the statements he ascribes, on pp. 5-6, to "Vālmīki's *Uttara-kāṇḍa*" are not found anywhere in the *U-K*; but see verse 1.6 in Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita*. Smith's statements on p.7 that Śaṅkaradeva "bases his *Uttara-Kāṇḍa* on Vālmīki's original" and that "unlike his peers, [he] apparently depends on Vālmīki and Vālmīki alone" are also incorrect.

kathā, was it perhaps because he considered that the two kāṇḍas were not really part of Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa? Two, the authors who added an *Uttara-Kāṇḍa* to Kāṇḍali's narrative called it a "*Seven-Kāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*"; it suggests that in their opinion the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki had only six kāṇḍas and that the *U-K* was not really a part of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa.

Thus we find that several Sanskrit poets, including Bhavabhūti and Dinnāga, in their works on Rāma either have nothing in common with the Sanskrit *U-K* or treat the *U-K* as distinct from Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa (and therefore felt free to change the stories of Sītā's exile and Śambūka in any manner they pleased), and that the same is true of several ancient as well as the most popular poets in the regional languages of India.

§19 The relief structures of the Gupta period at Nācnā Kuṭhāra and Deogarh in Madhya Pradesh and the slightly later ones at Paṭṭaḍakala in Karnāṭaka which depict Rāmāyaṇa scenes do not include anything from the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*.³⁴³ It suggests, even if it does not *prove* that the *U-K* was regarded as a work distinct from the Rāmāyaṇa.

§ 20 Finally we look at how Hindus of *today* look upon the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*. They may or may not enter into a debate on the theoretical question as to whether it is part of Vālmiki's Rāmāyaṇa, *but, in practice they do not consider it to be a part of the Rāmāyaṇa*. For instance, people who do daily *pārāyaṇa* of the Rāmāyaṇa — that is, reading of the entire Rāmāyaṇa continuously, a portion of it each day — *do not include the U-K in such reading*. Public discourses on the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa, extending over several days, also end with the *paṭhṭhābhīṣeka* (the consecration of Rāma as king) and the *phalaśruti* verses of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*. That is, the *U-K* is effectively considered as not belonging to the Rāmāyaṇa. The *Rāmacaritamānasa* of Tulsī Das has been discussed above, as also Kāmban's *Irāmāvatāram* (*Kamba-Rāmāyaṇam*) in exquisite Tamil poetry, exceedingly popular in Tamilnadu among Hindus and non-

343 See p. 29 of U P Shah, *Introduction, Critical Edition of the Uttara-kāṇḍa*, Baroda, 1975 and C Sivaramamurti, *The Rāmāyaṇa in Indian sculpture* in V Raghavan (ed.), *The Rāmāyaṇa tradition in Asia*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1980. Sivaramamurti has given a long list of sculptures in various parts of India, and gives many details of the sculptures as depicting various scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa; *none* is from the *Uttara-kāṇḍa*.

Hindus alike, and Viswanatha Satyanarayana's *Rāmāyaṇa kalpavṛkṣamu*, very popular among Telugu speaking people in the province of Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere. All of them follow Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and ignore the Sanskrit *U-K* (as seen above). In a lighter vein, we may add that many children (and parents) of today know the *Rāmāyaṇa* story [only] in the *Amar Citra Kathā* version (meant for children), a version which also ignores the *U-K* stories.

§21 From the evidence presented above, it is clear that a very large number of people in the past as well as a very large number in the present have rejected the claim that the *U-K* is a part of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Thus, according to tradition too, the U-K is not part of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa.* It is not surprising that most scholars are agreed that the *U-K* is a later composition and is not a part of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The irony is that some scholars who hold this opinion yet make statements on personages in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* by using the *U-K* as though it were a part — a seventh kāṇḍa — of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.